

MEMO

To: Local Unit Presidents, Council Presidents, and Board of Managers
From: Jane Brooks, Chairman, Legislation Committee
Subject: Preliminary Proposed Legislation Program for 2010
Date: March 16, 2009

Enclosed is the Preliminary Proposed Legislation Program for 2010. This is our members' opportunity to have input into the legislation process with the assistance of their councils and districts. They are able to make suggested changes to the language of the Legislation Action Item and Policy Statements at their District PTA meetings. District directors will bring suggested changes to the Spring Board of Managers meeting where the final proposed legislation program will be adopted.

Virginia PTA will hold a public hearing on Saturday, May 2, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. at Sheraton Park South, 9901 Midlothian Turnpike, Richmond, VA 23235. This is another opportunity for members to bring their thoughts for changes, additions or amendments to the Board of Managers. If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact Jane Brooks at legislation@vapta.org or (757)425-1597.

LEGISLATION ACTION ITEMS (LAI): are requests for the introduction, passage, or defeat of specific legislation by the General Assembly and/or regulations by the Virginia Board of Education or other appropriate agencies.

POLICY STATEMENTS (PS): are statements of Virginia PTA on general issues and may be used as the basis for addressing issues before the General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education or other appropriate agencies.

LEGISLATION ACTION ITEM #1

The Virginia PTA/PTSA seeks and supports programs that prevent crimes against children. The Virginia PTA/PTSA supports legislation that increases funding for government agencies in identifying and prosecuting those who have committed crimes against children.

Rationale:

Crimes committed against children in school and in the community can have a dramatic negative impact on a child's life, including school performance. There are a number of crimes committed against children by adults and peers including sexual exploitation, abduction, harassment, physical abuse, and bullying. The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude yet largely unrecognized and underreported. Research indicates that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys will be sexually victimized before adulthood (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children). Between 1980 and 2006, an estimated 52,300 juveniles were murdered in the United States – 1,755 in 2006. (Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report, U.S. Department of Justice). One of every

four crime victims known to law enforcement is a juvenile, and most of these victims are female. (Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report, U.S. Department of Justice). In 2003, child protective services agencies received an estimated 2.9 million referrals alleging that children were abused or neglected. An estimated 5.5 million children were included in these referrals. (Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report, U.S. Department of Justice).

The Internet has given our children unprecedented access to information, but it has also provided unprecedented access by sexual predators to our children. Sexual predators are now using the Internet to find, communicate with, and prey upon children and teens, putting hundreds of thousands of Virginia children at risk. Child pornography is one of the fastest growing businesses online, and the content is becoming much worse. In 2004, Internet Watch Foundation found 3,433 child abuse domains; in their 2006 annual report, they knew of 10,656 child abuse domains (Internet Watch Foundation. Annual Report, 2006). Government funding for crimes against children programs, both at the state and federal level, are not enough to address this serious issue and the Virginia PTA/PTSA supports increased funding to provide the necessary services to keep our children safe.

POLICY STATEMENT #1

Virginia PTA/PTSA supports local school boards in evaluating their grading scale policies for middle and secondary schools, to reflect current academic trends, local norms, and student achievement expectations in their school divisions.

Rationale:

The Virginia PTA/PTSA has the adopted position that opposes any constitutional change to reduce local school board authority/responsibility for public school supervision and administration to include mandating a uniform grading scale for all school divisions. Local units and councils should be able to advocate to their local school boards for a grading scale, including weighted grades for AP/IB/Honors courses, that reflects current academic trends and student achievement expectations to be comparable to other school districts with similar statistics.

Virginia PTA/PTSA supports all children being able to reach their fullest potential and supports offering educational initiatives such as AP, IB, and Honors courses to increase student achievement. Increased student achievement can provide students with the opportunity to qualify for “good student” discounts on car insurance, to qualify for merit scholarships, and to qualify for NCAA athletic scholarships. Encouraging local units and councils to advocate to their school boards to evaluate their grading scale supports these positions.

POLICY STATEMENT #2

The Virginia PTA/PTSA supports the requirement that all elementary, middle and secondary school teachers are provided fully-funded, unencumbered planning time.

Rationale:

The effort to professionalize teaching is predicated on a professional work environment. Teachers who work in collaborative school environments enjoy their work more, work harder, improve their practice of teaching, and see themselves as being more effective. Providing teachers time to plan instructionally together and observe one another so that they can improve is a key to an environment where teachers cooperate in school improvement and professional development tasks.

The report of the Task Force on Improving the Profession of Teaching notes that the “conditions typical of most schools are not conducive to the professional practice of teaching. Teachers work in isolation. Opportunities for collaboration in addressing the needs of students are minimal. School schedules and teaching assignments constrain professional collaboration in planning and problem solving.”

Planning time for teachers clearly qualifies as an essential condition for the professional practice of teaching. In the accreditation standards, the Commonwealth of Virginia has required planning time for full-time secondary teachers and for middle school teachers under certain conditions. Elementary planning time has recently become required by the commonwealth. All teachers—elementary, middle and high school— should be guaranteed a daily period within the student day or an extended period of time one or more days a week, exclusive of travel time and free of supervisory or instructional duties, for the purpose of instructional planning.

PTA MEMBER BALLOT

_____ (Name of PTA)

2010 Virginia PTA Proposed Legislative Program (PLP)

The PLP, the Proposed Legislative Program, contains issues and proposed positions on which PTA members are asked to vote upon. The members will decide if the Virginia PTA should advocate for these issues.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEMS (LAI) are requests for the introduction, passage or defeat of specific legislation by the General Assembly and/or regulations by the Board of Education or other appropriate agencies.

POLICY STATEMENTS (PS) are statements of the Virginia PTA/PTSA on general issues and may be used as the basis for addressing issues before the General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education or other appropriate agencies.

LAI #1 The Virginia PTA/PTSA seeks and supports programs that prevent crimes against children. The Virginia PTA/PTSA supports legislation that increases funding for government agencies in identifying and prosecuting those who have committed crimes against children.

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain

PS #1 The Virginia PTA/PTSA supports local school boards in evaluating their grading scale policies for middle and secondary schools, to reflect current academic trends, local norms, and student achievement expectations in their school divisions.

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain

PS #2 The Virginia PTA/PTSA supports the requirement that all public school teachers are provided fully-funded, unencumbered planning time.

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain



2010 Proposed Legislation Program Tally Sheet

ATTN: PTA/PTSA Presidents

Email or mail results to: Debbie Kilpatrick, Northern Virginia District PTA

District Director email: novadistrictPLP@gmail.com

Address: 13301 Green Mallard Court, Clifton, VA 20124

Deadline: October 24, 2009

Local Unit PTA/ PTSA: _____

PTA/PTSA president name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email Contact: _____

Total number of members in your PTA/PTSA as of your tally submission date: _____

Total number of members voting: _____

LAI #1

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____ Did not vote

PS #1

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____ Did not vote

PS #2

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____ Did not vote